

# Together for Wildlife

## Together for Wildlife HCTF Conservation Fellowship Recipient 2024



### Siobhan Darlington

Siobhan Darlington (she/her) is a PhD candidate in Biology at the University of British Columbia Okanagan working under the supervision of Dr. Adam Ford and Dr. Karen Hodges. She holds a Master of Science in Environmental Studies from the University of Victoria and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Dalhousie University.

Siobhan is originally from Halifax, Nova Scotia and grew up with a fascination for the terrestrial world while living by the sea. She worked in conservation outreach with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, monitored barns for endangered swallows and swifts with Birds Canada, and tracked Blanding's turtle with the Mersey Tobeatic Institute in the Maritimes. She became passionate about tagging and tracking wildlife to better understand how humans impact their populations through habitat alteration. She moved to Victoria BC to pursue her Master's research on white-tailed deer response to industrial development in the Alberta oil sands region and interned with fRI Research in Hinton AB researching the effects of mountain pine beetle on endangered caribou and grizzly bear populations.

Now, Siobhan is working on completing her Ph.D. dissertation titled "The spatial ecology and foraging dynamics of cougar in the southern interior of British Columbia". Her study focuses on the effects of forest harvesting, wildfire, and human activity on the distribution, population demographics, and diet of cougars. Cougars are managed as a game species in British Columbia and are primary predators of southern interior mule deer, a species which experienced a period of decline during the last decade. Siobhan's research on the Southern BC Cougar Project will tie habitat use by cougars to the prey species they consume including mule deer, elk, moose, and white-tailed deer in three study areas: The West Okanagan, Boundary, and Kootenays.

The Southern BC Cougar Project is the most comprehensive cougar study in BC's history and is a collaboration between UBC Okanagan and the Ministry of Forests with support from the Okanagan Nation Alliance and is a HCTF and FESBC-funded enhancement and restoration project. To date, the team has GPS-collared 53 individual cougars, monitored 56 offspring, and confirmed 935 kills. The results of this study will directly inform the development of a cougar management plan for the province and tie cougar predation of ungulate species such as mule deer to environmental change in the southern interior. More information about the project including recorded presentations can be found at [www.bccougarproject.weebly.com](http://www.bccougarproject.weebly.com)

